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Friday, 2 October 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 118 *(continued)*

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/53/345/Add.6)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): In a letter contained in document A/53/345/Add.6, the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communications contained in document A/53/345 and addenda 1 through 5, Equatorial Guinea has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The first speaker is His Excellency Mr. Delfim da Silva, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Guinea-Bissau on whom I now call.

Mr. Da Silva (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in Portuguese; interpretation from French text furnished by the delegation*): On behalf of the delegation of Guinea-Bissau, I am pleased to extend our congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. I am particularly pleased because it is unanimously agreed that you have exceptional intellectual, political and diplomatic qualities which will ensure the success of our deliberations. It also gives me pleasure to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, and to thank him for his dynamism and initiative and for the integrity which he displayed throughout his mandate.

I wish to reiterate to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, our appreciation for the tangible results we have seen in the Organization since his election, and to encourage him to persevere with the same determination in implementing his reform programme, which we wholeheartedly support.

As we prepare to enter the new millennium, it is important to be aware of the increasing interdependence of nations, large and small, and of the consequences of globalization, so that through fruitful dialogue at the global level, we may together find appropriate responses to the numerous challenges facing us, particularly the fight against international terrorism. Poverty, underdevelopment and the major pandemics must not remain the sole responsibility of the countries affected by these scourges, because for tomorrow's world to be stable it must be united founded on the principles of social justice and the equality of peoples and nations. Hence, the primacy of law must continue to guide us in

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seeking lasting solutions to the numerous regrettable conflicts throughout the world. We are pleased to note that all the peoples of the world share a determination to live in peace, within their national borders, with their neighbours and the rest of the international community.

My country welcomes the positive developments in the Lockerbie affair, which has been a matter of concern to us for many years. It has been the subject of decisions by regional organizations, such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the League of Arab States, as well as the Non-Aligned Movement. We hope that the parties involved will spare no effort to ensure that justice is done in conditions of fairness and impartiality, with all the necessary guarantees, taking into account the recognized rights of each party. We feel that the clarifications called for by the Libyan authorities are legitimate, because they are based on the objective criteria of neutrality and fair play which govern any judicial procedure worthy of the name.

The Republic of Guinea-Bissau was admitted as a fully fledged member of the United Nations in September 1974, following a lengthy and difficult struggle for national liberation. For almost a quarter of a century we have been committed to respecting and defending the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, because they are essential guidelines for active participation in international life and for the building of our young nation.

Early on we understood that in order to give shape to our political independence we needed to establish the conditions for harmonious economic development from which all sections of our population could benefit. With the assistance of the international community, therefore, our young State focused on ways and means to build a land of freedom and peace.

It goes without saying that 11 years of struggle for national liberation scarred our people and left an indelible mark on their minds and bodies. Since Guinea-Bissau is a poor country with very limited resources, everything needed to be built, despite the fact that we did not have the financial means or the necessary skills. Therefore, inspired by the courage that enabled us to galvanize ourselves to free our country, we set to the task determined to create the right conditions for the full development of our citizens and the improvement of their living standards.

Over the past four years we have succeeded in laying the foundations of a democratic State based on the rule of law and respect for human rights. As members of the Assembly know, building a nation is a long-term task requiring both determination and perseverance. Guinea-Bissau, which is among the poorest countries of the world, is no exception to that rule. Over the past two decades we have focused on consolidating our national unity by strengthening the ties of solidarity that unite our citizens, whose maturity had enabled them to wage, and succeed in, one of the most exemplary national liberation struggles in Africa. It is precisely this awareness of belonging to the same people that has enabled all sectors of our population to unite and work hand in hand for the development of the country and the well-being of all. Therefore, since its independence in 1973, despite the economic difficulties all States face, Guinea-Bissau has lived in peace and has known a period of great political stability.

However, since 7 June our country has experienced tragedy, previously unimaginable, just when it was beginning to make notable progress with regard to democracy and respect for human rights and in the economy.

An unprecedented crisis for which we were not even minimally prepared has deeply shaken and paralysed our country for some four months now, endangering the foundations of the state of law and the existence of democratic institutions in the Republic. The act of aggression by a party of our country's national army is a serious violation of the constitutional provisions in force in Guinea-Bissau. The international community, in particular the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations, have unreservedly condemned this act of aggression.

From this podium, we wish to thank the United Nations family for the solidarity and support it has provided to the President of the Republic, Mr. João Bernardo Vieira; the legal Government of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau; its leaders; and especially, the innocent, victimized population. I should like in particular to convey our gratitude to the neighbouring countries of Guinea-Bissau for their active solidarity with our people. On behalf of my Government, I specifically thank the authorities of Senegal, Guinea, Cape Verde, the Gambia and Portugal for having rapidly created an appropriate rapid-response team to evacuate citizens and foreign nationals who wished to leave, especially our own desperate compatriots, a great number of whom have sought refuge and safe haven in neighbouring countries. Each of these brother countries has distinguished itself admirably in an exemplary display of compassion and

humanity. I wish to thank them most sincerely on behalf of our Government and all of my compatriots.

I also wish to pay tribute to the courage of my own fellow citizens and to reiterate, on behalf of our Government, our keen awareness of the difficulties they face and of the need to ease their suffering by finding a speedy solution to the current crisis, so that peace and stability may be restored to our homeland, and by establishing conditions to allow our people to return to their country.

It is its desire to find a peaceful and negotiated solution to this crisis that has inspired the Government of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau in its contacts with the members of the self-proclaimed military junta. Indeed, through the joint mediation of members of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries and the Economic Community of West African States, we have signed a ceasefire and begun a constructive dialogue, which we will pursue on the basis of recognition and respect for the constitutional legality of our country and the need to work together to restore peace and stability.

We are grateful to all people of goodwill who have come forward, both in Africa and overseas, to assist us in overcoming all of these difficulties and in finding a final solution to the conflict in Guinea-Bissau.

The people of Guinea-Bissau are peaceful. They have age-old relations of friendship and brotherhood with their neighbours in the Republics of Guinea, Senegal and the Gambia. These relations are based on the common destiny which history and geography have bequeathed us. It is a precious legacy that present and future generations must preserve and defend in the conviction that their identity and their social and cultural values will endure. It is this same committed and unfailing solidarity which enabled us to free ourselves from the yoke of colonialism, as did our brothers in Guinea and Senegal.

As we have already had the opportunity to point out, the presence of Guinean and Senegalese troops in Guinea-Bissau is based on the implementation of bilateral agreements duly signed and ratified. In addition to the existence of an unquestionably legal framework, however, it is important to know and recall that, through their intervention, the Guinean and Senegalese troops bravely assisted their comrades in arms in Guinea to overcome an attempted coup that has been condemned by the OAU, the United Nations and the entire international community. They have made a courageous contribution to the maintenance of constitutional legality and democracy in Guinea-Bissau. Allow me here to pay tribute to them for their decisive action and to offer them our full gratitude.

For some four months, Guinea-Bissau has been experiencing a major tragedy that has brought great loss of human life, serious material damage and much suffering to our people, who have been internally displaced and made refugees in neighbouring countries, Cape Verde and Portugal.

Once again, I wish to thank the Assembly for its solidarity with our country and people. Its assistance is valued and will be valuable in healing the wounds and assisting all the citizens of our country to understand each other better and work together for the common future of their homeland. I can assure members that we will spare no effort to ensure that, through dialogue and joint endeavours, peace will return to a Guinea-Bissau united and reconciled in solidarity.

More than ever, we recognize the need to establish a pluralistic democracy in a state of law and an egalitarian society that will guarantee full respect for civil, political and human rights. Today more than ever, we are aware of the importance of peace in our country and in other conflicted regions of the world where peoples of the same country have been torn apart. I am thinking in particular of the fratricidal wars which for some years now have ravaged other African countries, Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in particular.

At a time when we are preparing to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is appropriate to proclaim our complete commitment to the fundamental principles of democracy, good governance and respect for human rights, which underpin our search for harmonious development and a better standard of living. The international community, the United Nations in particular, has always heeded the aspirations of the people of Guinea-Bissau. With its solidarity, it has made our struggle for national liberation its own battle for the emancipation of peoples throughout the world. Today, as in the past, we need its support to rebuild our country and restore confidence and hope to our compatriots, who impatiently await the moment when they can return to their country, their homes, their families, their friends and their workplaces — to peace and stability.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Rwanda, His Excellency Mr. Anastase Gasana.

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda) (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the people of Rwanda and on my own behalf, allow me to convey sincere and heartfelt congratulations to you on your outstanding election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. This election reflects the unanimous recognition by States of our Organization of your country, Uruguay. A well-deserved tribute is likewise extended to your distinguished predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, who demonstrated dedication, skill and open-mindedness at the last session.

Heartfelt fraternal thanks go to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his skill, performance and far-sightedness. This fifty-third session of the General Assembly is the second in his term of office. The Government and the people of Rwanda are grateful to the Secretary-General for the working visit he made to Rwanda in May 1998. That historic visit made it possible for him to take stock of the results of the genocide committed in Rwanda in 1994, and we thank him for his words of encouragement to the Government and the people of Rwanda for efforts made in the process of rebuilding the country.

Each time we have had an opportunity to do so, the Government of Rwanda has supported the proposals of the Secretary-General with regard to the essential reforms of our Organization and deemed that the same proposals for reform were likewise valid for the reform of the Security Council. We are prepared to continue our contribution to and support for the collective efforts to bring about more democratization in the Security Council at the dawn of the third millennium.

The existence of the specialized agencies within the United Nations has made this institution an instrument of development, particularly in the economic, social, political and cultural fields, and in many other areas. The Government of Rwanda supports the existence of the specialized agencies of the United Nations. The United Nations reform under way should take them into account in order to better structure them to be more operational.

Since the 1960s, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has constantly been a source of concern to the United Nations and the international community. One United Nations Secretary-General even lost his life there in the search for a solution to the problems of that country. Today, more than in the past, this country, Congo — which has since become the Democratic Republic of the Congo — is experiencing the darkest times in its history, because genocide is being committed there on the orders of the highest authorities of that country.

Since 2 August 1998, Rwanda, like everyone, has been witnessing a rebellion in the Democratic Republic of the Congo against the Government and President Kabila. Since then, the Government of Rwanda has consistently pointed out that that crisis is purely internal and that Mr. Kabila had definitely been facing a highly structured rebellion. The commission of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), composed of the four member countries Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Namibia and Zambia, acknowledged in its report to SADC, following its fact-finding mission, that a rebellion exists against Mr. Kabila in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. President Kabila himself implicitly recognized the existence of this rebellion when he published a long list of Congolese authorities that he banished by withdrawing their Congolese passports and issuing international arrest warrants against them. These Congolese were banished by President Kabila because they are leading the Congolese rebellion against him. Mr. Kabila's implicit recognition of this rebellion was also shown when he arrested and imprisoned six journalists from the Kinshasa news agency "La Voix du Peuple" because he suspected them of supporting the Congolese rebellion.

The position of Rwanda is to join its mediation efforts with those of the international community to find a solution to the Congolese crisis through negotiations between the Congolese rebels and the Government of President Kabila. Unfortunately, these efforts of the Government of Rwanda have collided with the obstinacy of President Kabila, who believes that the solution to this inter-Congolese conflict is to persecute and massacre the Banyamulenge, the Tutsi and the Rwandese living in Congo, as well as Congolese who refuse to support his grim designs.

In this respect, Rwanda, like other observers near and far, is concerned at the increase in human rights violations committed by the Government of President Kabila, which is inciting the people to genocide, massacres and racial and ethnic hatred. The Government of Rwanda believes that the United Nations must condemn the genocide as well as human rights violations being committed in the Democratic Republic of the

Congo and take the necessary steps against the Government of President Kabila.

This genocide and these human rights violations are characterized by summary executions, incitement to hatred by President Kabila and members of his Government, massive arrests, arbitrary detentions and forced disappearances. With regard to summary executions and incitement to hatred taking place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the following facts are illustrative. The present genocide and the massacres in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are similar to those that occurred in Rwanda in 1994 when the Radio Télévision Libre de Mille Collines (RTLM) was inciting people to hunt down Tutsis and their Hutu accomplices, as they were called by the radio station at the time.

During the Victoria Falls Summit, which took place on 7 and 8 August 1998, President Kabila declared that those who committed genocide in Rwanda were right and were worthy of support then and now. This is tangible evidence of recruitment by President Kabila of Interahamwe militias and former members of the armed forces of Rwanda who committed genocide in Rwanda and took refuge in Congo Brazzaville, a fact recently denounced by the High Commissioner for Refugees.

At that same Victoria Falls Summit, President Kabila implied that Rwanda was seeking to establish a Hima empire in the Great Lakes region. In that regard, my Government believes that that statement by President Kabila shows his racist leanings and theories, similar to those spread during the 1980s by the late President Habyarimana and his ilk, who invented this pseudo-empire to stifle the claims of Rwandese refugees who had been in exile for more than 30 years and who were beginning to vociferously reclaim their inalienable rights to unconditional return to their motherland.

These, then, are the racist theories cunningly invented and orchestrated by the former President of Rwanda, Mr. Habyarimana, and his regime in order to demonize the Tutsi. Now, unfortunately, Mr. Kabila is making use of them once more to demonize not only the Tutsi but the whole of Rwanda and all its people. In that context, the Government of Rwanda requests the international community to put an end to these groundless racist theories and this campaign to demonize Rwanda and its people.

President Kabila and his close collaborators are inciting the Congolese people to acts of mindless violence against any person suspected of being a rebel, any person of Tutsi origin and any person who, according to them, is in league, directly or indirectly, with the rebellion.

The governmental authorities of Kinshasa are calling upon the people, through the official media, "to treat the enemy like a virus, a mosquito, a piece of garbage that must be crushed with determination and without mercy".

The Congolese Minister of Justice, who after all is supposed to be safeguarding everyone's human rights, has said, "These Rwandans, these Tutsis, they are insects, microbes that must be methodically eradicated."

In support of the words of President Kabila, who said he would export war to Rwanda, the Congolese Minister of Health, Dr. Jean-Baptiste Nsonji, stated, "The Rwandans will become like snakes whose head and tail have been cut off, unable to move, unable to escape."

In response to these incitements to hatred and violence spread by President Kabila and the Congolese Minister of Information, Mr. Didier Mumengi, the Minister of Health, Dr. Jean-Baptiste Nsonji, and the Director of President Kabila's cabinet, Mr. Yerodia Abdoulaye, the population has begun to attack persons suspected of being in league with the rebels. People have been burnt alive because they were caught with red mud on their shoes — red being the colour of the mud in the region of the lower part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, at that time occupied by rebels.

The Government's soldiers have fired point blank at other suspects whose bodies were abandoned in the streets. Several mentally ill people were summarily executed because of a rumour, spread by Kabila's Government, that the rebels had disguised themselves as madmen in order to pass unnoticed. On 27 August 1998, a mentally ill person living at the corner of Kasai and Usoke streets in the town of Barumbu was riddled with bullets in the central market of Kinshasa. An unidentified person was summarily shot down because he was caught speaking on a cellular phone. Another person was executed purely and simply because he was speaking English.

President Kabila's governmental troops are using all possible means to wipe out the evidence of the atrocities they commit. Several witnesses, including some fishermen, agree that they saw human bodies carried on the waters of the Congo river. Other persons suspected of being rebels have been buried alive in Kitambo and Masina.

The mass arrests, arbitrary detentions and forced disappearances in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been denounced in particular by an African human rights association (ASADHO) that works in Kinshasa. The association denounced these arrests and disappearances on 10 August and 3 September 1998, and the following facts were stated by this Congolese human rights association:

> "Several individuals of Tutsi origin were arrested and arbitrarily detained in the Kokola and Tshatshi camps and in various jails belonging to the information service and in the Kin-Mazière jail in Kinshasa-Gombe; more than 500 soldiers from the former Zairian armed forces were arrested, and some are still missing to this day.
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> "Other Congolese who are married to Tutsis, friends of Tutsis or who look like Tutsis have been arrested in connection with this inter-Congolese conflict. Some persons have been removed from their homes, their hotel rooms and even from the premises of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Kinshasa, as a result of curfews and various manhunt operations decreed by the Kabila Government."

All these facts are cited from that Congolese human rights association.

The Rwandan Government believes, once again, that the solution to this inter-Congolese conflict lies in political negotiations between the Kabila Government and the rebels, for the following reasons.

First, the Congolese must resolve among themselves, once and for all, the question of nationality and citizenship, though this is not negotiable. Normally, a question of nationality or citizenship is not up for negotiation, but we believe that this problem has to be resolved among the Congolese. Indeed, we wonder why President Kabila's former ministers, such as the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Karaha, and the Minister of State to the Presidency of the Republic, Mr. Bugera, and many other Congolese citizens from the eastern part of the country have been banished from their homes and from Congolese territory. It is Rwanda's view that we cannot eternally have stateless people on our borders, especially the eastern border of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Secondly, this inter-Congolese conflict has repercussions for the security of the neighbouring countries, particularly Rwanda, given that Kabila's forces are a combination of all the criminal elements of the countries of the region. Security in the north of Rwanda is constantly menaced by elements of the former Rwandan Armed Forces and the Interahamwe soldiers who committed the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 and who still use Congolese territory as a rear base in order to reprise their gruesome crimes. The security of neighbouring countries must be a constant source of concern to the Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be constantly mindful of the fact that each time the forces of evil seek to sow insecurity in a neighbouring country, the country of origin of these destabilizing forces forfeits its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Thirdly, the Congolese army should be national, not a Katangese militia composed of followers of President Kabila; the Congolese of the eastern part of the country, the Banyamulengue, the Congolese of Masisi, those of Jomba and those of Rutshuru and other eastern locales, as well as other regions of the country, should also be part of it.

Fourthly, the inter-Congolese conflict will be resolved by good governance and good leadership that does not incite people to commit genocide and massacre of part of the population that it is supposed to protect. The political negotiations between the Kabila Government and the rebels must encourage the emergence of this kind of leadership, which the Democratic Republic of the Congo so urgently needs.

Fifthly, the philosophy of genocide and the culture of murder that President Kabila is cultivating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the assistance of former elements of the Rwandan Armed Forces and the Interahamwe soldiers that committed the genocide in Rwanda, as well as terrorists in the pay of either country, must be quickly eradicated from the Congolese population by a new, enlightened leadership devoted to the national cause, the cause of all Congolese without exception.

We have spoken at some length on the problems of the Great Lakes region, and particularly those of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; this is necessary in view of my Government's great esteem, respect and consideration for the fraternal people of the Congo. That is why my Government shouldered its responsibility and did its neighbourly duty to the Congolese people, *inter alia* by demonstrating solidarity with the fraternal people of Congo in helping it rid itself of the 32-year

dictatorship of the former President Mobutu, who had bankrupted the country.

In its efforts to find a solution to the present crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Government of Rwanda supports political negotiations leading to the emergence of a leadership worthy to guide the Democratic Republic of the Congo to a future other than that of genocide — which, unfortunately, is the situation under the regime of President Kabila.

But although President Kabila and his cronies have brought disappointment and despair to the Congolese people by sowing ethnic hatred in their country, Rwanda — which had the misfortune to be the victim of the 1994 genocide — has the right to denounce the crime against humanity that is now being perpetrated in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in order to prevent it from being exported to Rwanda, as appears to be on President Kabila's political and military agenda.

We hope that the United Nations will speedily condemn the genocide being perpetrated in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and will take the necessary steps to halt it before it is too late. Copies of the Dallaire fax on the genocide in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are without question to be found here in New York, at the United Nations Office at Geneva, at the European Union headquarters in Brussels and in every Western capital. In the light of the existence of the Dallaire fax, no one can claim not to have been informed in time to condemn President Kabila's acts of genocide and those of the Interahamwe militia and the elements of the former Rwandan Armed Forces, who planned and carried out the genocide in Rwanda more than four years ago.

At the very beginning of the crisis, the Congolese Minister of the Interior, Mr. Gaëtan Kakudji, quietly approached the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the High Commissioner for Human Rights and told them that unless they quickly organized the evacuation of all those who had been arrested, those people would be killed. We wonder what the United Nations did in response to that alarm sounded by a Congolese official, none other than the Minister of the Interior, who has now dissociated himself from President Kabila's acts of genocide by abandoning his ministerial post and fleeing his country for Europe, according to information in the media. The defection of the Congolese Minister of the Interior, who is a cousin of President Kabila, may be food for thought, and perhaps for inspiration, for President Kabila's new allies. Will they continue to support a genocidal regime that has come to be abhorred by its own people?

The Governor of Shaba-Katanga province also made a discreet appeal to the United Nations and, thus, to the international community; he revealed that he had official orders to massacre all Congolese Tutsis, anyone of Rwandese origin, and any Congolese who resisted this grim plan. How did the United Nations respond to that appeal from the Governor of Shaba-Katanga province?

Many people are wondering whether or not Rwanda has a presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They have, indeed, made this an overriding issue. The problem of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of attempts to resolve it is not to find out who is and who is not in the Congo; it is to try to understand why. Why is a given actor present in the Congo? What are the real reasons for such a presence there, and why is another actor not present or even trying to be there? Why is genocide being committed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the orders of the highest authorities, including President Kabila himself? What is the meaning of the presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo of the combined genocidal forces that came from Rwanda in 1994 — the Interahamwe militia, elements of the former Rwandan Armed Forces, elements of the ex-forces of the former Ugandan dictator Idi Amin Dada, terrorists in the pay of one country or another, and other trouble-makers? Around whom and against whom are these fascist forces uniting in the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo?

Will the United Nations and the entire international community wait for genocide to be committed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo before they dispatch a commission of enquiry after the event? Could not the International Criminal Court — whose recent establishment through the adoption of a suitable statute we welcome — quickly take up this matter and arrest the leader and his henchmen who are now engaged in murder in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?

Those are the real questions that in our humble view should be asked about the present crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — a crisis to which a purely political solution has to be found through political negotiations between the Government of President Kabila and the Congolese rebels.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call next on His Excellency Mr. Fritz Longchamp, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Haiti.

Mr. Longchamp (Haiti) (*interpretation from French*): It is a true pleasure for me to address the General Assembly once more. I wish first of all to echo previous speakers in congratulating you most warmly, Sir, on behalf of my delegation, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. I take this opportunity also to express our gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko for the excellent work carried out under his presidency.

To the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, we reaffirm our confidence in his outstanding endeavours to preserve peace and to promote development.

To all participants in the fifty-third session, I wish the greatest success in the interests of all our peoples.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Ten days ago hurricane Georges passed through the Caribbean region, striking several of our countries with its fury and leaving considerable damage in its wake. I wish to express deepest sympathy, on behalf of Haiti, to our brotherly Governments and peoples who, like us, were so hard hit by this unavoidable disaster.

The provisional toll in Haiti is quite heavy: 150 dead and dozens missing — more than 500,000 victims all told. There was considerable material damage to agriculture and to infrastructure: roads and bridges were destroyed and crops devastated in several regions. The total cost of these losses is estimated at approximately $200 million.

International solidarity was quickly displayed in the wake of this disaster. I would therefore like to thank all the friendly Governments, international institutions and non-governmental organizations for the support they have given us thus far.

While the present situation is serious, our concern for the future is even greater. With over 60 per cent of our agricultural production destroyed, the outlook is extremely bleak. We fear that once emergency aid is no longer being provided in the coming months there will be a severe shortage of foodstuffs and basic goods. We therefore appeal to the international community to extend considerable assistance to our efforts to restore and rebuild the affected zones and to support our measures to solve the public health problems that will arise. In this regard, we invite delegations to support draft resolution A/53/L.2/Rev.1, which will soon be introduced to the General Assembly, as a first step in this direction.

Profound changes have taken place in international relations in the course of the last 10 years. The lessening of ideological confrontation and the strengthening of interdependence among nations have provided new opportunities for closer cooperation among States. The phenomenon of globalization, which is characterized by unprecedented ties between human activities throughout the world, has expanded further and has been propelled by spectacular growth in communications.

Some had anticipated a more peaceful and united world in the next century. Yet, less than 500 days away from the year 2000, the international picture is frankly disconcerting. New hotbeds of tension have arisen in many regions of the world, while no substantial progress has been made to resolve various age-old conflicts. That is the case in the Middle East, where we hope that the recent discussions held this week in Washington will serve to permanently revive the peace process that has been stalled for more than a year.

We deplore the armed conflicts that have brought untold suffering on populations, be it in Kosovo, Angola, Afghanistan, the Great Lakes region or elsewhere. The Republic of Haiti invites the parties concerned to seek a solution to their problems through dialogue. The international community must also continue to carry out efforts to restore peace to these regions.

International terrorism, of which we had hoped to have seen the last, has re-emerged in a troubling fashion with the terrible events that have taken place in Africa and Northern Ireland. In condemning these acts, Haiti calls on the international community to adopt effective measures to combat this threat to international security.

Elsewhere, the world is facing a real challenge whose consequences are incalculable on more than one front. I am referring to drug-trafficking and its related crimes — arms-trafficking, organized crime and money-laundering.

The problem of drug-trafficking continues to threaten the integrity of our territories, to weaken the foundations of our societies and to undermine the health of our peoples. Combating this scourge requires further

cooperation at the bilateral, regional and international levels, as was highlighted at the special session of the General Assembly devoted to the drugs problem. Haiti, which has unfortunately been used as a transit country for some of the drugs headed for markets in consumer countries, has adopted a vigorous policy that has already begun to bear fruit. This involves the drafting of legislative measures against drug-trafficking and money-laundering; the establishment of a body entrusted with combating trafficking in narcotic drugs; the development of cooperation with neighbouring countries; and accession to international instruments in this area.

In speaking of the dangers threatening the future of mankind, I must refer here to the existence of considerable stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons. The Republic of Haiti welcomes the recent progress achieved in the reduction of these weapons. It will continue to support wholeheartedly the efforts of the international community for their complete elimination.

In this connection, Haiti deplored the nuclear tests recently carried out by India and Pakistan, which have contributed to increasing tensions in that part of the world. It invites those countries to become parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

The global economic situation at the end of this century has also given rise to many concerns. The phenomenon of globalization, which is characterized by a liberalization of market forces, which, according to numerous observers, should accelerate growth and promote development, has above all been marked by greater inequality and sluggish growth. The income gap between North and South has continued to widen. In 1965 the average per capita income in the G-7 countries was 20 times that of the world's seven poorest countries; by 1995 that figure had almost doubled.

Today poverty continues to grow throughout the world. Entire populations are victims of the serious problems of malnutrition and abject poverty. Health care and education are inaccessible to millions of people. There has been further destruction of the environment throughout the world, threatening the very survival of mankind. Even more than the countries of the third world, which have been battered by these global developments, the least developed countries — including my country, Haiti — find themselves ever more marginalized and must face a worsening of the standard of living of their peoples. The feeling of despair is increasingly spreading among younger generations facing a seemingly gloomy future. All of this poses serious threats to the very stability of our countries. This situation cries out for the international community to redouble its efforts to combat poverty. United and concerted long-term action that mobilizes considerable resources is essential if we wish to achieve satisfactory results.

The magnitude of current problems poses a major challenge to the international community. The United Nations, whose primary mission is to ensure world security and to promote economic and social progress for people, is the ideal forum to discuss these questions and to search for solutions that take everyone's interests into account. It must be able to play the role that has been entrusted to it in order to create a global situation of peace, which will facilitate development through cooperation for all peoples. It must respond to this challenge by using its resources effectively and by adapting itself to changes in international relations.

In this regard, the delegation of Haiti welcomes the reform process initiated by Secretary-General Kofi Annan to breathe new life into the Organization and to better enable it to face the increasingly complex problems of today's world. The initial measures approved by the General Assembly have enabled United Nations bodies to work more coherently and consistently. We hope that further measures to be considered at this session will strengthen the capacities of the United Nations to carry out its activities.

Reform in the Security Council, which has been discussed for five years now, is of capital importance given the role played by that organ in the maintenance of international peace and security. Haiti continues to call for greater openness in the functioning of the Council and for greater participation in the decision-making process, so that its decisions reflect the general opinion of the international community as a whole and not only the position of the members of the Council.

In this context, the envisaged increase in its membership must take into account more systematically the principle of equitable geographical distribution. Every effort must be made to ensure that the universality of all the planet's inhabitants is reflected in the United Nations system.

In this respect, we welcome the dialogue between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan. A positive

outcome to this dialogue will allow for progress in this area.

This year we are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. By enshrining the principle of the respect of fundamental human rights and by ensuring their promotion, the United Nations has made a considerable contribution to the development of an international system to protect the fundamental freedoms and ensure the emancipation of peoples throughout the world.

Along these lines, my delegation welcomes the fact that the international community has finally acknowledged that the right to development is an intrinsic part of fundamental human rights. But that acknowledgment is not sufficient. We must work to ensure full respect for that right by establishing programmes and by mobilizing sufficient resources.

Today human rights are a reality that no Government can ignore. In Haiti respect for human rights is guaranteed in the Constitution, and the Government is committed to ensuring the full enjoyment of those rights by all. In this context, reform in the judicial machinery that will allow for the consolidation of the state of law is now being implemented. Regrettably, however, the very complex situation resulting from a twofold electoral and governmental problem has made it difficult for institutions to function normally and to cooperate with the international community. To overcome this handicap, the President of the Republic, Mr. René Préval, is resolutely undertaking every possible effort.

Democratic institutions necessarily have a role to play, but given the regrettably slow process of democracy-building, the hoped-for results have not yet been achieved despite the numerous initiatives undertaken. It is encouraging to note, however, that these expectations and initiatives have been undertaken within the framework of the provisions of the Constitution, which guarantees that a viable solution will be found.

Similarly, the head of State has consulted all levels of Haitian society in order to set up a new electoral council that will be responsible for organizing, in accordance with the Constitution and as soon as possible, free, fair and democratic elections at the municipal and legislative levels. He will do everything in his power to guarantee the participation of all sectors in these elections, which, duly carried out, will help us overcome the governmental crisis that has arisen.

Despite the unfavourable circumstances that have darkened the horizon at the dawning of the third millennium, we must not lose hope in a better world. In order to do that, we must further develop cooperation, strengthen our partnerships and work together to improve our peoples' standard of living in a world where so many natural disasters and environmental phenomena remind us of our duty to solidarity. The United Nations is the ideal framework for joining our efforts to achieve this common goal.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The next speaker is His Excellency the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Angola, Mr. João Bernardo Miranda.

Mr. Miranda (Angola) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation*): Allow me to begin by congratulating Mr. Didier Opertti, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Angola, on his election to the presidency of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. We are convinced that his experience, wisdom and diplomatic skills will help us to achieve the goals we set for this new session.

Angola is especially pleased by the election of a representative from Uruguay, a country that has greatly contributed to the preservation of peace and security in the world, as was recently demonstrated by its participation in the United Nations peacekeeping operation in Angola.

I should like to pay tribute to the outgoing President for the manner in which he conducted the work of this important body during his mandate. And a word of appreciation goes also to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his dynamism and for the wisdom he has demonstrated at the helm of our Organization.

Almost 10 years have passed since the end of the East-West confrontation. We had hoped that by this time there would have been a greater positive impact on the international scene, especially regarding peace and security, and economic development.

Unfortunately, in spite of the progress we have made — particularly in the promotion of democratic values and in the greater respect for human rights, among others — we are still witnessing the proliferation of internal armed conflicts, violent border disputes among nations, military aggression against independent and sovereign States, continued degradation of the

environment, and economic decline with the consequent social and economic deterioration, especially in developing countries. We are also witnessing an increase in transnational organized crime and terrorism, which poses a serious threat to the stability of all nations.

This scenario casts a shadow over the prospects for the rapid implementation of the new political world order that emerged as a result of the end of the cold war, which would bring peace, stability, development and democracy. We still have a long way to go.

It is incumbent on the United Nations, given its universal character and singular role in international relations, to shoulder the main responsibility in the search for solutions to all the problems that have become obstacles to achieving peaceful development and the well-being of our peoples, and in devising fair and effective formulas that meet the collective interests of its Members.

The question of conflict resolution and prevention should be given high priority, for this will ensure the alleviation of tension in the world. The urgent creation of early-warning mechanisms will certainly enable the international community to act in a timely manner to prevent the triggering of potential conflicts, thus avoiding the repetition of past mistakes, such as those we have seen recently in Africa.

In this connection, Angola shares the views of the Secretary-General as expressed in the recommendations in his report (A/52/871) on the prevention of conflict and the promotion of sustainable development in Africa, and hopes that the members of the Security Council will turn them into practical action.

United Nations international arms control efforts should not be restricted to weapons of mass destruction. We must urgently focus on the issue of small arms and other war matériel sold to terrorist groups by some producer countries. These supplies have led to an increase in armed actions by subversive groups and are an incentive to all those who wish to take power by force. We believe that the creation of special mechanisms for the control of small-arms exports to armed groups, as well as the imposition of restrictive measures against those States that violate them, could help to stop the proliferation of weapons around the world.

The United Nations, in cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, should promote the creation of collective defence and security mechanisms as a means to prevent the threat of conflict and guarantee the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of States.

The United Nations will not be able to face many of its challenges unless it can count on the commitment and engagement of its Member States. This is especially true with respect to the resolution of its financial crisis and the reform of its structures to conform to the new international reality. We feel encouraged by the reforms undertaken by the Secretary-General aimed at turning the Organization into a more dynamic and effective body. The reform process must be thorough and include the United Nations main bodies, especially the Security Council. The Council's current structure is outdated. Angola supports eliminating the current geographical imbalance in the composition of the Security Council by increasing the number of both permanent and non-permanent members to ensure that the main regions of the world are fairly represented.

The claim of the African continent to at least two permanent seats should be adequately addressed, not only because the region is not currently represented at all, but also because it is the largest regional group in the United Nations. Angola also supports the Brazilian claim to a permanent seat given the exceptional role the country has played in United Nations activities in all areas, and especially because it belongs to a region that has no permanent members in the Security Council.

The Republic of Angola is facing a difficult and critical phase in its history. We cannot yet announce the end of the war and the beginning of a new era of consolidation of democracy in Angola. The peace process and all related efforts made by both the Angolan Government and the international community are blocked due to UNITA's deliberate, systematic non-compliance with the provisions of the Lusaka Protocol, the pertinent Security Council resolutions and Angolan law. Mr. Jonas Savimbi has demonstrated his unwillingness to transform UNITA into a civilian political party.

As Members are aware, the Lusaka Protocol, signed by the Government and UNITA in 1994, should have led to the end of the internal conflict, which was resumed by UNITA after its defeat in the 1992 general elections. But, four years since the agreement came into force the peace process has yet to be concluded, and, what is even more dangerous, it has suffered serious setbacks due to the successive obstacles raised by UNITA's militarist wing, led by Mr. Savimbi. UNITA deliberately deceived the United Nations and the international community when it

declared that it was totally demilitarized. As the Security Council itself could determine, UNITA continues to maintain active military units with sophisticated weaponry.

UNITA has also hindered the process of normalization of State administration by refusing to abandon the areas it illegally occupies. At the same time, it has initiated a new escalation of hostilities throughout the country, unleashing armed attacks against local government authorities, the national police and the national armed forces, while also engaging in massacres of the civilian population. Hundreds of people have been killed, mostly civilians; about a million have been displaced; and UNITA has reoccupied areas where State administration had already been normalized. The United Nations Blue Helmet units and humanitarian convoys have also been targets of UNITA's military actions, which constitute crimes against humanity, given their nature and characteristics as well as the coldness and cruelty with which they are committed. They are terrorist crimes as defined by international human rights and humanitarian law instruments. The international community cannot passively watch these systematic abuses, which flout international legal and moral values.

During the recent summit in Durban, South Africa, the heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement condemned Jonas Savimbi for these systematic human rights abuses. Similarly, the heads of State or Government of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) — well aware of the seriousness of the Angolan situation, which has had terrible repercussions for the whole region — held Mr. Savimbi solely responsible for the current stalemate in the application of the Lusaka Protocol. Due to Mr. Savimbi's staunch pursuit of war as the only means to attain political power, he is continuing to reinforce his military wing's capabilities. This behaviour was declared by SADC to be that of a war criminal. As has been done in some other regions of the world, Mr. Savimbi and perhaps his closest collaborators — who together are responsible for all the war crimes committed in Angola — should be made to respond in court for the heinous crimes they have committed over many years.

Throughout the peace process, Jonas Savimbi's stance has revealed a personal strategy aimed at creating generalized chaos in the country in order to take power by force. The facts are clear: it does not make sense for UNITA to resort to armed struggle against a State where political activity is not restricted and where UNITA participates in its main political institutions — namely, the Government and Parliament. Furthermore, Angola's armed forces include hundreds of UNITA members, including generals.

It is unacceptable to have a political organization such as UNITA, which is not even subject to international law, challenging each and everyone, including the Security Council by blatantly and systematically violating its resolutions. UNITA itself is being penalized because of one man, Mr. Savimbi, who abuses the good faith of his countrymen who believed in UNITA as a credible political alternative in the emerging political system of the fledgling Angolan democracy.

For all those reasons, the Security Council in resolution 1127 (1997) tried to separate the wheat from the chaff. In the course of imposing new sanctions against UNITA, the Council issued a list of UNITA members universally considered dangerous elements. This list is headed by Mr. Savimbi, who is thereby forbidden to freely circulate in the world. Only a criminal would receive such a sanction from the international community.

Along those lines, the Angolan Government has suspended UNITA members from participation in the Government. The Government demanded a clarification of their position vis-à-vis the peace process in Angola: either they are in favour of peace and democracy, or, like their leader, they choose war as a means to take political power. All those who chose peace have since resumed the activities for which they had been appointed within the framework of the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation. Recently, political leaders and party cadres, together with officers from UNITA, made it clear that they did not support war as does Mr. Jonas Savimbi.

On 2 August, they issued a political manifesto denouncing Mr. Savimbi's behaviour and, in an effort to revitalize UNITA, they created a Renovation Committee which removed Mr. Savimbi from the leadership of the party. The goals defended by the UNITA Renovation Committee in its political manifesto are those of peace and the consolidation of democracy. This renovation movement supports the peace accords, national reconciliation and the effective transformation of UNITA into a civilian political party, and it has given a new breath of hope for the conclusion of the peace process.

For that reason, the Angolan Government has decided to recognize UNITA's Renovation Committee as its only interlocutor and partner in the implementation of outstanding tasks in the Lusaka Protocol. The SADC

countries have already recognized the Renovation Committee, and we are convinced that the international community at large will not hesitate to support and promote the efforts of the new UNITA leadership as it assumes its role in the young, multi-party democracy in Angola.

The Government of Angola does not believe it is either prudent or realistic, but rather, dangerous, to yet again give Mr. Savimbi the benefit of the doubt. This would only lead to more false expectations, and we would be wasting much valuable time to take appropriate measures in this respect.

In the light of the new situation in UNITA, the Angolan Government feels optimistic and therefore is still committed to the successful conclusion of the Lusaka Protocol. It will, however, continue to take all necessary measures against those who pursue attempts to disrupt the political order, so as to guarantee the territorial integrity of the country and the protection of its citizens.

From this rostrum we want to draw the attention of countries, such as the Togolese Republic and Burkina Faso to the fact that the Government of Angola will not continue to tolerate the support they are providing to UNITA's militarist wing led by Mr. Savimbi. This includes facilities for military training for these groups to commit terrorist acts in Angola. This is a clear violation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Charter, the United Nations charter and Security Council resolutions 864 (1993), 1127 (1997) and 1173 (1998).

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my Government's heartfelt tribute to the efforts and role of the United Nations in the peace process in Angola, and especially the contribution of the late Maître Blondin Beye, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General, in support of peace in Angola.

I would also like to reiterate my Government's appeal to the international community to continue to render humanitarian assistance to the displaced people in Angola and to assist in the rehabilitation of social and economic infrastructures.

Angola is also concerned about events in other areas around the world. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the military invasion by foreign forces is a serious threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of that country. This could also destabilize the central and southern regions of the continent. This led some countries, including Angola, to consent to the request for military aid by the Congolese authorities within the framework of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security.

The recent summit in Victoria Falls of the leaders of the countries involved in the problem is a step in the right direction for the resolution of the crisis. Angola supports the withdrawal of the invading troops and the drafting of an agreement that ensures respect by all countries in the region of the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This would enable that country's authorities to begin the task of establishing a broad internal dialogue that should lead to general elections in 1999, in accordance with the democratization programme established by President Kabila.

Angola welcomes the reinstatement of the legitimately elected authorities in Sierra Leone and the initiation of the process of the return of the refugees. Angola hopes this is the beginning of the normalization of the situation in that country.

In Guinea-Bissau, the signing of a ceasefire agreement between the Government and the junta opens broad opportunities for a negotiated end to the conflict. We salute and encourage the efforts being developed by the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP), where Angola, along with the countries of the region, will continue to contribute to their efforts to foster reconciliation between brothers and sisters in Guinea-Bissau.

In Western Sahara, the obstacles placed in the path of a peaceful solution have been progressively removed. Angola continues to believe that a referendum held on the basis of fairness and justice is the best means for the people in the territory to choose their own destiny. We support the continuation of United Nations and OAU joint efforts.

We would also like to call the attention of the international community to the problem of Somalia. Although we recognize that the parties to the conflict have the primary responsibility for finding a peaceful solution, we believe this will be possible only with the support of the United Nations.

We regret the lack of significant progress in the Middle East peace process. Angola encourages the parties to comply with the commitments made under the Oslo agreement. We continue to defend the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and we advocate

a rapid and fair resolution of the issues of the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine, which should take into account the interests of all the peoples in the region. We believe that this will ease the tensions in Arab-Israeli relations.

The situation in East Timor, a territory with which Angola shares linguistic links and a common anti-colonial struggle, has recently seen positive developments as a result of the understanding reached between Indonesia and Portugal, under the auspices of the United Nations on the reduction of the Indonesian military presence in the territory, will contribute to the achievement of a peaceful solution. Angola reaffirms its support for the struggle of the people of East Timor for their right to self-determination.

The current world economic situation raises serious concerns, since it contributes directly to the deterioration of the standards of living of millions of human beings, especially those in developing countries. We are concerned by the imposition of unilateral restrictions to free trade and financial and economic cooperation, such as the embargo imposed against Cuba. Its victims are the most vulnerable groups in society: women and children. The extraterritorial nature of these measures runs counter to international law and does not contribute to forging links of friendship among peoples.

We believe that we urgently need to promote international economic cooperation based on a partnership that will allow all those that participate in the process to share equitably in its gains. In spite of the implementation of endless reforms and structural adjustment programmes, as recommended by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the economies of developing countries continue to make such modest advances that we must question the real objectives of such reforms.

We join with those who have spoken before us in reiterating our need to consider establishing a new international economic order that is more real, more fair and more equitable, capable of strengthening the international financial system and supporting national efforts to promote economic development throughout the world.

It is not enough to appeal to the understanding of the developed countries. We need to be more strongly involved in the transformation of the international economic picture. The application of measures that would have an immediate impact, accompanied by well-structured programmes, such as the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa, deserve special attention if they are to attain the success we expect of them.

The Final Declaration of the twelfth summit of non-aligned countries, recently held in Durban, South Africa, also defines some steps that can be taken to solve the crisis, among which it underscores an increase in South-South cooperation.

This year, we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This occasion should be an incentive to develop effective instruments to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, since non-respect of these rights is the main cause of conflict and instability. The establishment of the International Criminal Court will be a significant step in this direction. The Angolan Government is sparing no effort to promote, protect and defend all human rights. Were it not for the bellicose behaviour of Mr. Savimbi, Angola would have hosted, late this year, the first ministerial conference of the Organization of African Unity on human and peoples' rights in Africa. That initiative was my Government's contribution to the jubilee of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In conclusion, let me emphasize the role the United Nations is playing to promote and protect human rights throughout the world.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia, His Excellency Mr. Irakli Menagarishvili.

Mr. Menagarishvili (Georgia): Allow me at the outset to congratulate the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, Mr. Didier Opertti, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. This decision, to which Georgia acceded with pleasure, is a fitting recognition of Uruguay's high international authority and a well-deserved tribute to Mr. Opertti's personal qualities and profound experience.

At the same time, I am honoured to have the opportunity to express my gratitude to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine, for his significant contributions to the successful outcome of the previous session.

Today, as the second millennium is coming to a close, an inevitable question pops up: What will the next, the third, millennium be like? Indeed, for the first time since the end of the global stand-off, the opportunity has emerged to create a qualitatively new world order based upon the comprehensive development of free and independent States. Allow me to share our observations on some of the important issues that we face.

We have repeatedly underscored the threat to global stability posed by the spread of the disease of aggressive separatism and the ineffectiveness of our joint efforts to cope with it. For five years now, the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, has been on the agendas of a number of international forums. The need to resolve this conflict within the framework of the territorial integrity of Georgia and to ensure the speedy return of hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons has been reiterated more than once. However, we have to admit that real progress towards the settlement of this conflict has not been accomplished.

Moreover, in May 1998, as a result of the punitive operation carried out by the Abkhaz side in the Gali region of Abkhazia, Georgia, more than 60 civilians were killed, about 1,400 houses burned and over 40,000 peaceful civilians expelled once again from their land. The vigorous efforts of the Georgian Government at that point averted full-scale confrontation and bloodshed.

The tragedy in the Gali region was preceded by the unfulfilled resolutions of the Security Council and by decisions on the "ethnic cleansing" of the Georgian population in Abkhazia, Georgia, adopted at the Budapest and Lisbon summits of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Thus, we are once again confronted by the acute problem of the implementation of decisions taken by the international community.

The Government of Georgia remains committed to a peaceful solution of the conflict and applies only political means, to which there is no reasonable alternative. In order to add new impetus to the peace process, we have welcomed the creation and development of the Geneva process, under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of the Russian Federation as facilitator, the Friends of the Secretary-General and the OSCE. More active work should be conducted in the framework of the Geneva process on the question of the political status of Abkhazia within the Georgian State.

In our view, it is urgent to fully resume the functioning of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and, in accordance with its mandate, to ensure the freedom of its activities.

The matter of utmost importance is the safety of UNOMIG personnel in the conflict zone. Their vulnerability was again proved by the recent armed attack against four members of UNOMIG in Sukhumi.

In this regard, we wish to emphasize the importance of the proposal of the Secretary-General concerning the deployment of self-protection units. Unfortunately, this question has turned into a subject of endless discussion. Indeed, it is unclear how the deployment of a self-protection unit would contradict the interests of any of the parties to the conflict or any other State, when this step is intended only to facilitate UNOMIG's intensive monitoring and would contribute to peace in the region.

While categorically condemning terrorist acts, regardless of the motives or where these acts might come from, we support the creation of joint investigative teams with clearly defined mandates of action.

The turn of events in Abkhazia, Georgia, has shown that some important aspects should be touched upon. First among these is the development of economic programmes of post-conflict peace-building to promote the peace process. We already have an example of the successful implementation of such an approach in the settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict. The implementation of the economic programme in close cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has brought about the realization of a number of important projects for the reconstruction of the social and economic infrastructure in the conflict zone and, most importantly, has activated the mechanism of the return of refugees to their homes. Recently, we have embarked upon the implementation of the subsequent stage of the programme, which has been financed by the European Union.

Secondly, for the success of the peace process, we deem it necessary to formulate and effectively implement confidence-building measures between the parties to the conflict. To this end, and for the implementation of the measures formulated and the coordination of work in this direction, we believe it would be reasonable to actively engage the joint United Nations-Organization for Security

and Cooperation in Europe Human Rights Office in Sukhumi.

The third aspect is the grave humanitarian situation existing in internal conflicts, such as the one in Abkhazia, Georgia. I refer to the fate of hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons. We regret that the rights of the internally displaced persons are not protected by an international act.

President Shevardnadze has called upon the world community to mark 1998, the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, by elaborating a comprehensive plan for the creation of an effective international mechanism for the protection of the rights of internally displaced persons throughout the world, including their political rights, the right to protect their property and the right to return to their homes. In this regard, we actively support the proposal of the Secretary-General concerning the creation of an organizational structure for the protection of the rights of displaced persons.

When discussing the creation of a global model of security for the twenty-first century, we have to admit that the post-confrontational world is not yet secure, and the problem of separatism is not the only threat against which we have to consolidate our efforts.

We cannot but express our concern over the expansion of the zone of nuclear proliferation. The nuclear tests in South Asia have clearly made this threat far more ominous. Therefore, we call upon all States to display goodwill and a commitment to peace, and to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Efforts to quell the hotbeds of the so-called local conflicts have so far been unsuccessful. Georgia is deeply concerned at the developments in Kosovo, and especially in the north Caucasus region, namely, in Chechnya, Dagestan and across the border of North Ossetia and Ingushetia.

Terrorism, with all its bloody manifestations, poses a threat both to the region and to the world as a whole. Unfortunately, Georgia has also had its fair share of terrorism. The assassination attempt against the President of Georgia was aimed at the destabilization of the country and of the entire region. These and the recent terrorist acts against the United States embassies in Kenya and Tanzania require an intensification in the fight against terrorism. Therefore, we must actively support any efforts to do away with this evil.

As we usher in the next millennium, it is impossible not to touch upon the problems of economic development and economic security. The process of economic globalization raises the question of a new role for the United Nations as a universal institution which would effectively contribute to the development of national economies and ensure economic security at both the regional and the global level.

All this is especially urgent for the post-Communist countries with economies in transition. Since restoring its statehood in 1991, Georgia has been on a difficult road, having gone from chaos to stability and from total economic collapse to development. This became possible through democratic change and economic reforms.

We have come to believe that the successful transition of the newly independent States to the market economy depends entirely on their integration into the international economic system through regional and interregional cooperation. A clear example of the implementation of a large-scale programme of economic cooperation is the revival of historic Silk Road. The Summit of the Transport Corridor: Europe-Caucasia-Asia (TRACECA) member States, held recently at Baku, Azerbaijan, emphasized that the idea of an alternative roadway for the Central Asian region through the south Caucasian corridor has already turned into a significant system stretching across the whole Euro-Asian continent.

The economic cooperation of the Black Sea basin countries is also very important. This area was recently transformed into a regional economic organization, having impressive potential and far-reaching plans.

In the course of the formation of a new world order, the main responsibility for international peace and security rests with the United Nations. An important step would be the reform of the Security Council in accordance with the new geopolitical realities. In this regard, we reiterate our position concerning the inclusion of Germany and Japan among the permanent members of the Council. We also support the increase in the number of non-permanent seats, providing one for the States of the Eastern European region. We also advocate more transparency in the work of the Security Council, including participation in its closed meetings by those non-member States whose problems happen to be the subject of the Council's discussions.

We are aware of the importance the United Nations attaches to the timely contributions of its Member States. In this regard, despite its economic constraints, Georgia will do everything in its capacity to cover its indebtedness to the Organization.

Special attention should be accorded to the further development of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

We believe that the time has come to further develop and institutionalize the system of standby arrangements. The creation of the Multinational United Nations Standby Forces High-Readiness Brigade can play an important role in preserving the peace. The same is true of the establishment of a well-equipped headquarters from which to identify potential hotbeds of tension.

Georgia has always advocated the establishment of an International Criminal Court and actively participated in the Rome Conference. We believe that the establishment of this permanent jurisdictional body will ensure that gross violations of human rights and crimes against humanity no longer go unpunished.

Like many previous speakers, in my statement I have resorted to such expressions as "new challenges" and "new threats" in the post-confrontational world. But at the same time, the new era opens before us new and boundless horizons and creates new opportunities in the formation of a new world order. We believe that only by joint efforts and common political will can we cope with these challenges and realize all these opportunities.

The Acting President: I now call on the Chairman of the delegation of Uzbekistan, His Excellency Mr. Alisher Vohidov.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): Allow me first of all to offer my sincere congratulations to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, Mr. Didier Opertti, on his election to the post of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session and to wish him every success in this important task. I am confident that his long experience and abilities will contribute to the successful outcome of the current session of the General Assembly. I should also like to express our appreciation to the previous President of the General Assembly, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, for his energetic and professional work.

I would like to take this opportunity to draw the Assembly's attention to the problems that are of greatest concern to the States of our region.

The President returned to the Chair.

The international community fully recognizes the danger of recent developments in Afghanistan, South Asia and the Republic of Tajikistan. There is an enormous potential for conflict in this subregion today. The threat that the Afghan conflict may explode and spread to neighbouring States remains a real one. Uzbekistan has repeatedly appealed to the international community from this rostrum for assistance in resolving the Afghan problem.

This goal should be served, *inter alia*, by our initiative to impose an arms embargo on Afghanistan. The appeal to halt deliveries of weaponry and *matériel* to all parties to the conflict has been reflected in numerous Security Council resolutions and awaits the creation of an effective mechanism within the United Nations so that it can be implemented. The Six Plus Two group, with the participation of Afghanistan's neighbouring countries, as well as the United States and the Russian Federation, which was established as a result of a proposal by Uzbekistan, is today, in our opinion, the only effective international mechanism within the United Nations capable of launching the peace process. Its task is not to condemn the warring factions, to criticize them or to support one of them against the others. We are united by a common goal, which is to find a path to stability, security and peace.

A great deal of interest is now focused on energy projects and transport communications in the region. However, the implementation of these projects should not cause confrontation, but should on the contrary promote stability and the development of mutually beneficial cooperation between the States of the region. Given the ongoing hostilities in Afghanistan, the importance of the Six Plus Two group as a full-fledged negotiating instrument is growing. Within that framework — and with the cooperation of the inter-Afghan forces — it is possible not merely to elaborate the terms of reconciliation but also the necessary measures to restore statehood to that country and bring about its economic revival. In that connection, we fully support the decisions of the meeting of the Six Plus Two group held at the level of Ministers for Foreign Affairs, which took place on 21 September of this year in New York. We also commend the efforts of the Special Envoy of the

Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi.

Recent developments in Afghanistan have confirmed that one of the most important conditions for the restoration of peace in the Islamic State of Afghanistan is the achievement of consensus at the regional level and the elaboration, under the aegis of the United Nations, of a single position to be taken by the countries that have an influence on events in that country. Cooperation with the Afghan factions in order to reach a speedy settlement of the Afghan conflict is the ultimate goal of the proposed on-site meeting of the Six Plus Two group in Tashkent. We hope for further support for this proposal from interested States and the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan.

The problems that affect the vital interests of Uzbekistan, in particular the establishment of lasting peace in Tajikistan, the cessation of war in Afghanistan, the imposition of an arms embargo on the Afghan zone of conflict, the establishment of a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone, the construction of transport communications and the revival of Aral Sea are all part of global international processes that are under way and could be implemented under the aegis of the United Nations.

I believe that the events of the last decade have convinced everyone that no State can, on its own, resolve transnational security problems such as illicit drug-trafficking, terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of their components.

The Government of Uzbekistan welcomes the efforts of the United Nations to counter the spread of narcotic drugs and to implement the Political Declaration adopted at the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, held in New York in June 1998. Today, in some European countries, up to 90 per cent of the narcotic drugs consumed originate in Afghanistan. The international community is aware of the need to take coordinated action to counter illegal trafficking in narcotic substances and to implement the principles of international cooperation in this area on the basis of mutual assistance and solidarity. However, we believe that these principles should also reflect specific regional aspects. In particular, once again we call for the elaboration of special programmes to plan for concrete, joint action by the States of Central Asia and the European Union.

Unfortunately, terrorist acts have become a common occurrence in many countries. Existing international mechanisms to fight terrorism, including political isolation, economic sanctions and direct military intervention, are not achieving results. We should have no illusions about this phenomenon. Today we need coordinated and targeted action by the entire international community. In that connection, we welcome discussion of one of the most complex issues in international law: the possibility of and need for a new approach to the problem of terrorism. The importance of resolving this whole set of problems is obvious.

In this connection, Uzbekistan has taken the initiative to establish within the framework of the United Nations a commission for the prevention of terrorist activities and for fighting international terrorism. The main task of such a commission would be to formulate recommendations on questions relating to the fight against international terrorism. Making use of legal norms, the United Nations could prosecute the organizers and perpetrators of terrorist acts. If Member States support this initiative, Uzbekistan will take an active part in bringing it to fruition.

Uzbekistan has consistently taken steps to ensure peace and strengthen regional security. One of these is Uzbekistan's initiative to establish a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone. Considerable progress has already been made to implement this idea. Allow me to cite the closing statement of the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko:

> "In a decision designed to further promote the regime of nuclear nonproliferation, the Assembly adopted a consensus resolution supporting the initiative to establish one more nuclear-weapon-free zone, in Central Asia. The significance of that step became even more apparent in the light of the recent nuclear tests in southern Asia". (*A/52/PV.92*)

Here, let me express our special gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, for their well-informed and strong support of this initiative.

When considering potential threats to national security, we ought today to give special attention to problems of ecological security and environmental protection. It is common knowledge that the drying up of the Aral Sea has caused many complex ecological, socio-economic and demographic problems, whose origins and gravity are international, even global. The Aral crisis is

one of the most serious of the world's ecological and humanitarian disasters. It has had a direct impact on more than 35 million people who live in the Aral Sea basin.

A number of decisions have been adopted at international and regional meetings on the problem of the Aral Sea. But these have not been backed up by practical action. We are obliged to say that the idea is gaining ground in the international community that the Aral crisis can be contained through humanitarian operations. That is not the case. This is an extraordinary ecological problem that requires the establishment within the United Nations system of a regional commission on the ecology of Aral Sea. This initiative is justified by the need to formulate and implement a specific long-term strategy and programme for resolving the Aral crisis on the basis of the principles of sustainable development, maintaining the standard of living of the people of the region, and ensuring a decent life for future generations.

Modern Uzbekistan is in the process of establishing a State based on the rule of law, a civil society and an effective, socially oriented market economy. It has an acute need for the experience and know-how of international bodies. At the same time, our republic is devoting great attention to the question of recruiting Uzbek experts for the activities of a variety of United Nations bodies. Let me stress that the level of training and knowledge of Uzbek specialists is fully in keeping with the requirements for recruitment to the bodies and specialized agencies of the United Nations system. I am confident that specialists from Uzbekistan can and should contribute to the work of international organizations.

In conclusion, I should like to stress in particular that our relationship with the United Nations is intended not only to obtain assistance and support, but primarily to enable us to play our full part in the successful implementation of the purposes and principles of the United Nations and to give fresh content to the activities of the Organization.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call next on His Excellency Mr. Domingos Augusto Ferreira, Chairman of the delegation of Sao Tome and Principe.

Mr. Ferreira (Sao Tome and Principe): On behalf of the people and the Government of Sao Tome and Principe, and on my own account, I congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, and wish you success in carrying out your duties.

On the occasion of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe would like to join with all other countries of the world in advocating the cause of development, peace and liberty for all the world's people. We want also to state our deep concern at the grave problems which affect mankind and which pose a threat to the world.

We are one year away from the beginning of a new millennium, and it is with sadness that we observe a world deeply divided between North and South, rich and poor, and developed and underdeveloped countries.

The African continent continues its process of healing and its struggle towards development. In recent decades many countries of our continent have become independent and democratic, and are ready for the open market. Some of them have experienced significant economic growth. Economic reforms and democracy have made them favourable ground for development.

However, against this background, many African countries have become poorer. Bad management and various types of crisis have given these countries very few opportunities for development. In 1996, 240 million Africans were living on less than one dollar per day. Africa's share of international trade was only 2 per cent, and the continent received 2 per cent of foreign investment. Poverty is increasing, and political instability is creating violent conflicts which are very difficult to control.

With deep sadness, we observe too many armed conflicts, such as those in Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, the Great Lakes region, Guinea-Bissau, Eritrea and so on. Too many lives have been lost; too much economic infrastructure and too many homes have been destroyed; too many refugees have been created. That is the result of armed conflicts in our continent.

This situation merits the attention of all in order to prevent armed conflicts, by creating an environment for dialogue and reconciliation based on democratic principles, good governance and respect for the human rights of minorities.

The situation in Guinea-Bissau requires the special attention of the international community in order to promote dialogue between all the parties in conflict. We participated in negotiations as a member of the

Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, together with the Southern African Development Community, and our mediation resulted in a ceasefire. We appeal to both parties to create a good environment to secure peace and tranquillity and restore the normal functioning of democratic institutions and respect for the Constitution.

Angola is also our concern. We call on the international community to avoid another war in that country. We also appeal to UNITA and to the Government of National Unity and Reconciliation, of which UNITA is a part, to fulfil all the objectives of the Lusaka Protocol and work for peace and development.

The situation in Central Africa and the Great Lakes region is for us the most worrying in our continent. I do not want to exaggerate, but I can say that this subregion is in flames which can spread into other countries. Our desire is to work together with the international community and all countries in the subregion to seek a solution. Despite all the approaches already made to end the conflict peacefully, we cannot remain inactive while the conflict is widening, with catastrophic consequences. The international community must continue to work for peace to stop the suffering of innocent people.

Besides the conflicts on the African continent, there are others, such as that in East Timor. The East Timorese people have been suffering under foreign occupation. They are fighting for self-determination, the right to freely choose their own destiny, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. If we deny them those rights, we contradict the principles of our Organization. Against this background, we reaffirm our support for the Maubere people in their struggle for self-determination. We appeal to the United Nations and the international community to continue supporting the negotiations to reach a peaceful end of the conflict.

The world is facing serious environmental problems. The development of programmes to protect our planet must be a priority, and we must work together to avoid behaviour that damages the environment by creating pollution, land degradation and destruction in general. We need to follow the Rio Declaration if we want a safe environment and sound development. We have to pay special attention to the problems of desertification, water pollution, deforestation and biological diversity.

I would like to call attention to resolution 2758 (XXVI), adopted in 1971, which denied over 21.8 million people their right to international representation and totally contravenes the principle of universality, consecrated in the Charter. The admission of the Republic of China on Taiwan as one of our own would not pose a challenge to any of the existing Members, and the peaceful coexistence of the two sides in this Organization would be a catalyst to end one of the largest and most enduring sources of instability in Asia. Taking into consideration this and the changes that have taken place in international relations, we call on the General Assembly to review resolution 2758 (XXVI).

Fifty-three years after the United Nations was founded, I would like once again to emphasize and praise the positive contribution this Organization has made to freedom, development and peace. The Organization faces more and more challenges, and it is necessary and convenient to proceed with reform of the system to make it capable of responding to the demands upon it. The reform must also include the Security Council; it is time to reform its structure to provide a better geographical representation.

It is our understanding that a more democratic, efficient and less bureaucratic United Nations may better shoulder its obligations and carry out its duties, in order to guarantee progress and universal peace.

The struggle against organized crime, drugs, money laundering and international terrorism must be one of the priorities of the United Nations and of all countries. Everybody must contribute to fighting these problems and their catastrophic consequences.

My country is facing a difficult moment in its history. The economy of Sao Tome and Principe has been undergoing deep changes. Statistical data show that there is a significant improvement. It seems that inflation has slowed; there is an improvement in the fiscal system and the value of the national currency has risen.

The Government has been making efforts in order to achieve satisfactory results in the area of economic development and reducing poverty. One of our concerns is related to the problem of our high foreign debt, estimated at nearly $270 million and which is 54 times greater than the value of our exports. Despite all the efforts that have been made, these numbers are still tragic. It is essential for Sao Tome and Principe to benefit from having its foreign debt forgiven. It is very important for us to be able to participate in the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative.

In closing, I would like to thank the United Nations and its specialized agencies for the support given to my country.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

I would like to remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Yimer (Ethiopia): This morning the Assembly listened to a statement by the Foreign Minister of Eritrea containing the usual litany of distortions and obfuscations regarding the current crisis between Ethiopia and Eritrea. We characterize them as the usual litany because they represent the futile attempts that the Eritrean Government makes in various forums to cover up its aggression against Ethiopia and the occupation of our territory by force.

Since by virtue of the continued occupation of Ethiopian territory by Eritrea the aggression against Ethiopia is continuing, the Eritrean leadership is trying to shed the stigma of aggressor by trying to divert the attention of the international community from the real issue: blatant aggression by one State against another, in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and of the basic norms and principles of international law.

In essence, this is not at all surprising, since that is how aggressors always behave. The represent themselves as victims. But it is not that easy to deceive international opinion for long, because the facts speak for themselves. However much they may try to portray the crisis between Ethiopia and Eritrea as a border dispute, it is incontrovertible that the crisis stems from the aggression committed by Eritrea against Ethiopia on 12 May 1998. No one, except possibly the Eritrean leadership itself, believes otherwise, and they know it.

In his statement, the Eritrean Foreign Minister claims that his country believes that all inter-State disputes should be settled by peaceful means and without the use of force, and that this has always underscored his country's relations with its neighbours. This has never been valid over the past seven years. There have been four victims, in effect all of Eritrea's neighbours, including, most recently, Ethiopia, which have been the victims of Eritrea's aggressive attitude over the past seven years of its existence as a State.

In view of this stark fact, it is the height of arrogance and an insult to the intelligence of the international community, in particular the victims of Eritrean aggression, to say that Eritrea is committed to the peaceful settlement of disputes between States. On the contrary, what Eritrea is committed to is the use of force for the settlement of disputes between States.

Secondly, the Minister stated that Eritrea was surprised and disturbed by the eruption of conflict with Ethiopia. Again, this is a peculiar form of surprise by an aggressor which has committed aggression following deliberate planning and preparation.

Thirdly, the Eritrean Foreign Minister claims that the attack by Ethiopia against Eritrea in the Badma region on 6 May is the root cause of the dispute. This is a most surprising claim in view of the fact that the basic element of the proposal by the facilitators — the United States and Rwanda — and the specific initial requirement for the proposal to be set in motion is that Eritrean troops should leave Ethiopian territory and be redeployed to the position they held before 6 May 1998, and that Ethiopian civil administration should first be restored to the area.

No third party has ever even hinted that Ethiopia has attacked Eritrea at any time. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) Committee of Ambassadors, in its report which was presented to the two Governments, has, over and above stating clearly that is has reached the conclusion that Badma and its environs were under Ethiopian administration before 12 May 1998, also stated that what happened between 6 and 12 May 1998 constituted a fundamental element of the crisis.

Fourthly, the Eritrean Minister in his statement repeatedly denied that Eritrean troops had crossed internationally recognized borders between Ethiopia and Eritrea. In this assertion he is trying to deny the undeniable: that Eritrean troops crossed the international boundary between Ethiopia, and that it has been established by third parties — by the facilitators, when they called for the deployment of Eritrean troops to the position they held before 6 May 1998; by the OAU Summit, in supporting the facilitators' proposal and calling for its implementation; by the Security Council, in supporting the OAU decision; and by the OAU Committee of Ambassadors — that Badma and its

environs, now under Eritrean forcible occupation, were under Ethiopian administration before 12 May 1998.

Fifthly, the Eritrean Minister accuses Ethiopia of portraying Eritrea as a warmongering nation. But its behaviour has given them that identity, not any propaganda campaign by Ethiopia. No other characterization would be suitable to Eritrea's belligerent attitude towards its neighbours over the past several years. The claims that Ethiopia has designs on the Eritrean port of Assab is such an unadulterated fabrication that we will not dignify it by any reply.

Sixthly, the Eritrean Minister has made the claim that Ethiopia has rejected all overtures by third parties for the peaceful resolution of the dispute. In this connection, the third parties will be even more surprised than the Ethiopia Government by this twisting of the truth. It is common knowledge that at every step of the way, Ethiopia has officially and formally accepted third-party proposals — such as those of the facilitators, the United States and Rwanda; the decision of the OAU; and the resolution of the Security Council — while Eritrea resorted to its usual prevarication, amounting to a rejection of the proposals.

With regard to the humanitarian consequences of Eritrean aggression against Ethiopia, that aggression has resulted in the displacement of over 200,000 Ethiopians from the areas adjoining the Ethiopian territory invaded by Eritrea. Those remaining under Eritrean occupation are suffering under the inhuman treatment of the Eritrean regime, ranging from outright physical torture to the forcible imposition of Eritrean nationality on pain of losing the right to farm their plots of land. There was, of course, the bombardment with napalm by the Eritrean air force of civilian targets, including schools, in broad daylight at Mekele and Adigrat towns in northern Ethiopia, which was seen by people throughout the world.

Thousands of Ethiopians in Eritrea are still suffering under the cruel treatment of the Eritrean Government, prevented from returning home and denied all means of livelihood. They are in effect hostages in the hands of the Eritrean Government. Those who have money to return home recount harrowing stories about the treatment of their compatriots remaining in Eritrea. The Eritrean Government has so far expelled 24,000 Ethiopians under inhuman conditions.

On its part, the Ethiopia Government has never denied that it has asked those Eritreans in Ethiopia who pose national security risks to Ethiopia to leave the country. In this connection, we have repeatedly assured the international community that the human rights of the individuals concerned are fully respected and their rights to their properties are not in any way affected.

Let me reiterate what our Foreign Minister told this body only yesterday: that the cause of the current crisis between Ethiopia and Eritrea lies, among other things, in the Eritrean leadership's propensity for aggression against Eritrea's neighbours, in particular at the whim of a dictator. As long as this state of mind is there, one cannot see how a peaceful resolution of the crisis, which we even at this moment fervently wish for and seek, can be reality. Yet the Eritrean Minister has the temerity to suggest peaceful resolution without any preconditions, with the cessation of hostilities and a ceasefire. He has in fact shrouded the nefarious act of rewarding aggression in seemingly innocuous concepts. One is not so naive as not to see through this Eritrean deception and duplicity.

For our part, we have made it clear in no uncertain terms, ever since the Eritrean aggression, that we are not prepared to go through such a charade.

Mr. Makonga (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*interpretation from French*): Many delegations have denounced or deplored the aggression against my country. Most have urged a quick end to hostilities. Surprisingly, only the delegations of the aggressor countries did not want to acknowledge what they were doing. Some used security reasons to try to justify their acts, others used internal problems.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot say too often that Rwanda is not only the base for this aggression but that, for undisclosed reasons, it supports it. The internal problem that it continues to raise is merely a false alibi intended to cover up its abuses and its desire to annex part of our territory regarded as a natural grain-producing area.

Unfortunately, since the occupation of part of Kivus the situation has worsened to such an extent that meeting the subsistence needs of the local people is no longer assured. This is a genuine catastrophe.

Pillage, plunder, rape, deportation and harassment have become commonplace throughout the occupied territory where the invading troops are engaged in terrible acts that run counter to the humanism of which Africa would like to become the champion. As an example, the Rwandan invaders committed an odious

assassination during a religious service. One Rwandan soldier made a name for himself in Kasika by raping the pregnant wife of the traditional chief of the village, then ripping the foetus out of her womb and drinking its blood. How should we classify this act?

As the Assembly will have noted, the Rwandan invaders are not only committing every imaginable and unimaginable crime against peaceful Congolese civilians, but are bringing their tradition of ethnic hatred to my country. Even as I speak, in Bukavu they are hunting down Hutus.

The international community should know that many current Rwandan leaders — for example, the Minister for Foreign Affairs — lived peacefully in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for decades, taking part freely in country life. We did not kill or threaten these people; rather, we welcomed them and gave them refuge, not out of naivety, but because of basic humanism. And so what interest would the Democratic Republic of the Congo have now in persecuting the other Rwandans who live on our soil?

Rwanda says on the one hand that the situation now prevailing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is an internal problem; on the other hand, it claims the right to intervene at any moment in order to protect the Tutsi populations and at the same time to secure its borders.

On behalf of my Government, given the confusion deliberately fostered by Rwanda about this unjust war imposed on the Congo, I would like to say that there are no internal problems in my country; rather, an act of aggression is being committed against the Congolese State by neighbouring Rwanda and its ally, Uganda. What is now happening in Bukavu and Goma is nothing more than a result of blood lust, a thirst for vengeance, the Kigali leader's obstinate search for every sort of subterfuge to allow the establishment of ethnic supremacy.

The Congolese people have never had such desires. By nature they are very hospitable and will never lift a finger to harm those who seek refuge in their country.

The insecurity along the border between Congo and Rwanda is the work of the Rwandans alone. Since their country became independent they have been unable to live in ethnic harmony and have thus created an unnecessary tide of displaced persons and refugees. Unfortunately, their refusal to integrate has had unexpected consequences for the inhabitants of the villages along the border; furthermore, it is destabilizing Rwandan political institutions, a process made worse by periodic massacres, to the extent that the international community has had to establish an international criminal tribunal to put an end to this genocidal culture.

The insecurity now prevailing in the region can only be resolved if Rwanda agrees to democratize itself by restructuring and completely reorganizing its State organs.

This Assembly should know that one of the Congolese puppets placed in Goma by Kigali has admitted to the foreign press the presence there of some of the Rwanda Patriotic Army troops who perpetrated the aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Rwandans' denials have convinced no one. Therefore, there should be an end to attempts to make the international community believe that Rwanda is in no way involved in what is happening in the Congo and that it is just an internal matter. If this were so, how could the presence of Rwandan troops in Goma and Bukavu be justified? Their presence has been confirmed by local citizens, the select ministerial commission of the Southern African Development Community, the international media and independent sources cited in my statement on 23 September.

I do not want to dwell too long on this subject, but my delegation hopes that the Assembly will approve the addition of an agenda item on the matter, as proposed for the present session, and that a resolution condemning the aggression will be adopted.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Responding to the statement made this morning by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Equatorial Guinea, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that — as the Deputy Prime Minister recognized in regard to the case he mentioned — the Government of Spain firmly rejects and unreservedly condemns all terrorist acts, wherever committed and whatever criminals may be responsible. This firm position of my Government was expressed most clearly a few days ago by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain at the 12th meeting, during the general debate, when he stated:

> "Terrorism constitutes a serious threat to domestic and international security, to the development and functioning of democratic

institutions throughout the world and to the exercise of human rights."

He then indicated our support for strengthening the machinery of international cooperation to combat this threat.

Mr. Menkerios (Eritrea): The Eritrean delegation has no interest in wasting the Assembly's valuable time by engaging in a useless polemic with a party that feels that hollow sophistry can make up for realities. We choose to present the facts on the questions of aggression; Ethiopia's forceful occupation of our land; its criminal violations of the human rights of Eritreans and of Ethiopians of Eritrean origin resident in Ethiopia; the expulsions; the confiscation of property and so forth; and Eritrea's attempts to achieve a peaceful solution. These attempts have been futile because of the Ethiopian Government's total rejection of all proposals presented by Eritrea and its sticking to its ultimatum demanding Eritrean withdrawal from disputed lands.

Mr. Ubalijoro (Rwanda): I did not wish to take the floor, but having heard the reply of the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo I wish to put on record the following:

The statement made this afternoon by my Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Mr. Anastase Gasana, was based on pure and concrete facts. The purpose of my Minister's statement was to describe a tragic and worrisome situation on the ground in our region. For the umpteenth time, the international community has been alerted.

Although I was shocked and dismayed by the statement of the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I will not waste the Assembly's time by replying to his baseless allegations and fabrications. But I would like to state that I am glad that he was not in a position to refute or deny the content of my Minister's statement when he referred to the incitation to ethnic hatred and genocide by the Democratic Republic of the Congo authorities. Indeed, my Minister used quotations simply because he was making reference to factual events that have generated untold tragedy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In order to demonstrate how we attach the utmost importance to facts, I wish to read an excerpt from an article contained in today's *International Herald Tribune*, entitled "The Most Dangerous Thing in Kinshasa Is to Be, or Resemble, a Tutsi".

It reads:

> "Kinshasa television broadcast interviews with residents vowing to throw Tutsi out of the city. An official radio station in the eastern town of Bunia on Aug. 8 urged Congolese to attack Tutsi, whom it described physically: 'Dear listeners! ... Open your eyes wide. Those of you who live along the road, jump on the people with long noses, who are tall and slim and want to dominate us.'
>
> "Mr. Kabila, who lacks an effective army, declared Aug. 25 that all Congolese should 'take up arms, even traditional weapons — bows and arrows, spears and other things' to crush the enemy 'because otherwise we are going to become the slaves of these Tutsi people.'
>
> "Congo's most prominent human rights group — the African Association for Defense of Human Rights, which operates clandestinely since the government banned it in April — said the government 'abusively exploited patriotic feelings to incite the population to blind acts of violence against anyone suspected of being a rebel, a Tutsi or connected even remotely with the rebellion.'"

On this note, I wish to conclude and leave members to assess the genocidal character of the Kabila regime.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): For the record, my delegation would like to exercise its right of reply in response to the references to East Timor made by the Chargé d'affaires of Sao Tome and Principe in the General Assembly in his statement this afternoon.

Indonesia's principled position regarding the decolonization of East Timor is clear. The historical and irrefutable fact is that the East Timorese people have already democratically exercised their right to self-determination. This they did by choosing independence through integration with the Republic of Indonesia in accordance with resolution 1514 (XV) and Principles VI, VIII and IX of resolution 1541 (XV), as further confirmed by the relevant provisions of resolution 2625

(XXV). The United Nations was kept fully informed of every step in this process.

Indonesia has consistently demonstrated its good faith and sincerity to cooperate with the efforts of the office of the Secretary-General and engage in a tripartite dialogue with Portugal, held under the auspices of the Secretary-General since 1982, in the search for a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to the question of East Timor. Towards this end, Indonesia has proposed to grant a special status to East Timor with wide-ranging autonomy in the context, and as part, of a settlement, and has expressed its readiness to negotiate the substantive elements of this proposal.

This proposal reflects the reaffirmation of Indonesia's sincere commitment to resolving the issue of East Timor. Hence, as noted in the Secretary-General's progress report (A/53/349) on the question of East Timor dated 10 September 1998, within the context of a tripartite dialogue the negotiations have moved in a new direction recently, bringing new promise for an early settlement of the problem. It is our expectation that this progress will be sustained.

It is therefore a source of profound regret that the representative of Sao Tome and Principe chose, unlike other delegations that have spoken on the subject, to ignore these irrefutable facts and spoke against the positive atmosphere which has recently been created.

Finally, Indonesia remains fully committed to the people of East Timor and to supporting them in their hopes and aspirations to build a better and more stable future for their children and themselves as Indonesian citizens.

Mr. Yimer (Ethiopia): The fact that the Eritrean delegation has not chosen to waste the Assembly's time in trying to reply to my statement is to be appreciated. Accordingly, I stand by my earlier statement.

Mr. Makonga (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*interpretation from French*): I just want to say one word to my young brother, the representative of Rwanda. It is difficult for honest people of integrity to understand the lies or explain the hallucinations of Rwandan neighbours who would besiege the Democratic Republic of the Congo and make it an integral part of their territory. I do not want to get into a futile argument with him. Let Rwanda withdraw from the Democratic Republic of the Congo instead of persisting in its nonsensical actions, which will not pay off in the long run. The truth is more rewarding than a lie.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): No other delegations wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Before closing the meeting, I would like, as President to make a statement.

With the comments of the last speaker, the general debate at the fifty-third session has drawn to a close. I believe that all representatives will agree that the statements we have heard over the past two weeks have been extremely interesting and have confirmed that although this exercise has been repeated annually for more than five decades it has by no means become routine, due to the growing dynamism of the subjects discussed.

It is therefore impossible for our Governments to maintain a static vision of the complex international realities considered in all their dimensions. The perception, recognition and better understanding of these new realities, as well as existing ones, are such as to ensure that the content of our debates is constantly renewed and that they provide a process of mutual enrichment, from which we all benefit. I must therefore thank all those who have participated.

Personally, I believe that this debate has provided us with a unique and invaluable opportunity to see how the Governments of Member States view the world in these final years of the century; what problems, in the view of their leaders, have an impact on the peace, security and prosperity of peoples; and what direction the international community should take in order to address and resolve these issues.

This time, 26 heads of State, one Vice-President, one Crown Prince, 15 Prime Ministers, 14 Deputy Prime Ministers and Ministers for Foreign Affairs, 105 Foreign Ministers, six Ministers from other departments or secretariats, 11 heads of delegations and one Observer — in total, 180 speakers — took part in the debate. Thus, the Assembly received an exhaustive overview of the situation. It is, of course, not my intention at this time, nor would it be within my power, to draw any conclusions. That is not my responsibility and this is not the time to do so. However, I should at least like to share some thoughts which the statements made over the past two weeks have brought to mind.

In nearly every statement made during the debate that has concluded this afternoon, we find expressed —

explicitly or implicitly, emphatically and less so — a concern among Governments over the profound economic inequalities between, on the one hand, the vast sectors of humanity mired in poverty or an insufficiency of resources and, on the other, the minority living in prosperity and abundance. It is within that context that many statements revealed and stressed the concern that the rapid and inexorable process of globalization, which is reaching into all aspects of international relations, may also be the natural result of scientific and technological development. There is mounting interest in securing a deeper understanding of the nature of the process so that the international community can prepare itself to manage its effects, work on its causes and ensure that the globalization of the economy does not benefit a mere few while harming the weakest and most vulnerable.

We have heard calls for a definition of new rules to regulate this contemporary financial phenomenon, which has a natural effect on commercial trade, and to promote a re-examination, revision and possibly an adjustment of the existing structures of the financial system that emerged from the Bretton Woods agreements. Those structures date back to over 50 years ago — when, as was recalled by one head of State, there were no computers — and the agreements do not seem to meet present needs.

To be fair, however, it is also useful to recognize, as if that were not enough, that the phenomenon of globalization produces assets and liabilities. While it inspires feelings of unease and distrust among some, it appears to have heightened the need for us to work together. Global problems call for a global response. That inescapable truth is now, more than ever before, clearly and urgently understood, as was demonstrated by the convening of a high-level dialogue on globalization in this Hall just a few days ago.

On a different level, the general debate has enabled us to review situations which threaten or effectively undermine international peace and security in various regions of the world: Africa, Asia and Europe. Unfortunately, such situations are many and painful; they involve dozens of countries and millions of people, leaving in their wake death, destruction and refugees ousted from their homes. I sensed in a number of statements a feeling of frustration, if not powerlessness, at the Organization's limited ability — due to the scant resources at its disposal — to take the necessary preventive action to anticipate these actions and events, much less to cope after the fact with their impact and repercussions. In any case, we must not lose sight of the fact that there is renewed confidence, expressed in most statements, that the United Nations should pursue its efforts.

The Organization's difficulties in taking rapid, effective action in some cases to avoid breaches of the peace or to restore peace inevitably compel us to focus on conflict-prevention mechanisms. Many delegations referred to the need to strengthen the mechanisms that allow the United Nations to play its preventive role more effectively.

A few days from now, the General Assembly will have an opportunity to make a valuable contribution in this regard when it considers the topic of the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, on which the Secretary-General has produced an excellent report, for which I thank him.

The peoples of several regions of Africa are currently enduring unspeakable privations as a result, in some cases, of natural disaster and, in others, of serious internal and inter-State conflicts. Sometimes, both phenomena are at cause. It is clear from all the statements made in the general debate that the Assembly wishes to devote special and priority attention to the situation in Africa. I hope that the Assembly will be able to consider the issue in depth on a priority basis and that it will succeed in determining how the United Nations might provide the sister African countries with rapid, effective assistance in overcoming these extreme situations, which have touched us all.

This debate has also shown that the international community is becoming increasingly impatient and sometimes dissatisfied with the lack of progress in the search for solutions to other conflicts whose prolongation poses a serious threat to peace and security. Some of these conflicts are included in our agenda and I hope that we will be able to adopt targeted, substantive and meaningful resolutions on them that can be effectively implemented.

In this regard, we have seen some encouraging signs. I am referring in particular to the statements made by the representatives of Israel and Palestine in the course of the general debate confirming their desire to conclude the peace process and their willingness to resume negotiations that will lead to a positive conclusion of this long-standing conflict.

The debate has inevitably revealed that there is still profound, widespread concern at the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Numerous references were made to the events of this year that proved that this concern was fully justified. That has prompted many representatives to urge countries that have not yet done so to join non-proliferation regimes. Accordingly, we must find the ways to promote strengthening of the institutional legal framework needed to put an end to the arms race, the proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear testing.

Fortunately, in the course of the debate we also received encouraging signals from countries deeply involved in that matter, by way of their pledges to accede to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). In this context, I must mention the imminent entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We must vigorously promote universal accession to the Convention in order to ensure the complete elimination of those lethal, cowardly and impersonal devices.

The problem of terrorism has been another of the topics most singled out by speakers. On the basis of the numerous references made to the issue in the general debate, it can easily be concluded that Governments hope that the United Nations will deepen and continue the battle against terrorism by expanding the legal framework combating and suppressing it. It is also hoped that progress will be made in achieving the priority goal of reducing organized crime, particularly illicit drug-trafficking and the more subtle forms of international crime, such as the illicit trafficking in persons. I trust that we can reach agreements on these topics that will show the desire to make genuine progress in our work, and that our work will have a direct relationship with those on whose behalf it is done.

The participants in the general debate have borne in mind and have rightly recalled that this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is undoubtedly an occasion worth commemorating. It is also an occasion for substantive reaffirmation, for renewing a commitment that does not end with a mere instrument but extends to the real conduct of those who govern and those who are governed. The internationalization of the protection and guarantees of human rights is undoubtedly an ongoing process that in recent years has reached a significant stage, even a sort of culmination in the establishment of standing international tribunals for the prosecution and punishment of perpetrators of grave human rights violations and other serious crimes.

These circumstances, however, cannot conceal the fact that vast segments of humanity continue to suffer violations of their rights. It is the duty of our Organization, and this Assembly in particular, to continue the effort to complete the institutional legal framework on which the system of protection of these rights is based. The adoption of the draft declaration on human rights defenders, which we hope will be by consensus, will be the best tribute that the Assembly could offer on the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights.

We also have the realistic hope that we can adopt significant decisions on the strengthening of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, on the protection of the rights of women and children, who are very often the most vulnerable sectors of the population, and especially on children in armed conflicts.

Throughout the debate many references have been made to the United Nations as being the most appropriate, though not only, tool for confronting these and other problems and challenges. It is clearly evident, however, that this tool, not only because of the passage of time but also because of the transformation of the international community as a whole, must be refined and honed in order to adapt it to new times, new expectations and new demands of the international community.

Thus, the topic of the reform of United Nations procedures of the Charter has been a constant and recurring theme of the statements we have heard. We have all been made more aware of the difficulties involved in carrying out an immediate, deep-going transformation. This will be possible only if preceded by a careful intellectual process imbued with deep political thought; only if carried out with care in and a spirit of cooperation; only if time is not the deciding factor, but a factor that must be taken into consideration in keeping with the urgency of the need, the strength of the solution and the necessary worldwide scope. Therefore, I trust that when the moment comes to resume negotiations, we will be able, with the participation of all at this fifty-third session, to reach basic agreements leading to a definitive solution. We know it will not be easy, but precisely for that reason we must not delay.

Naturally, efforts to strengthen the functioning and institutional structure of the Organization to increase its efficiency will be futile if its economic situation remains permanently precarious, if it is always in financial crisis. This debate has again shown that the Organization will be

unable to accomplish its tasks fully if it does not receive the necessary economic resources.

It is impossible in these brief remarks to reflect the richness of ideas and the profundity of the debate and initiatives presented during the general debate.

I have allowed myself to make these brief and necessarily incomplete summaries, it is to remind the Assembly that the task before us in the coming weeks is a formidable one, a considerable responsibility that must be added to our individual responsibilities. I trust that intelligence, dedication and our collective spirit of responsibility will make this task possible. I have been convinced, from the moment I assumed the presidency of the General Assembly at this fifty-third session, that there exists in the General Assembly a spirit of progress, a constructive spirit; even amid the misunderstandings and the diversity, there exists an urgent will to overcome differences and disagreements. We must not allow ourselves to be the ones who fail to meet expectations. Let us work so that our final statement at the close of the fifty-third session will not be a confession of frustration but an encouraging voice of hope.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 9?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.